

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS
A PILOT STUDY OF MODERN MARRIAGE IN WEST AFRICA

A research project is at the moment in progress, the object of which is to study intensively the social framework of modern marriage in Accra. It is part of a cross-cultural study of elite marriage and family life being undertaken in collaboration with the Department of Social Anthropology Edinburgh University. Other probable places for field work will be Sierra Leone and Scotland. The core of the field work will be concerned with the collection of data relating to spouses' conjugal roles and their social networks, one main aim being to test Bott's hypotheses in different cultural environments, another being to pave the way methodologically for a wider survey of modern African marriage.

The investigation is based upon the study of a small number of professional families and information is being amassed by means of intensive interviewing, collection of life histories and genealogies, questionnaires and participant observation. Data is being collected during the period September 1967 to July 1968 and will include five broad categories of information, home and household organisation, economic practices, social activities, care and training of children and family relationships.

As well as trying to assess the degree of segregation of conjugal roles in different spheres of marital interaction and attempting to describe the structure and content of the spouses' significant social networks, some attempt will also be made to assess the degree to which the nuclear family is individuated in terms of economic, jural, residential or other criteria.

This initial investigation is somewhat limited in scope in order that one of its primary objectives, the standardization of research procedures for the wider cross-cultural survey, may be achieved.

It is hoped, that theoretical generalizations and hypotheses put forward on the basis of the data gained from the intensive study of this non-random sample of homogeneous families, may be tested by the data collected by means of questionnaires administered to a comparatively large population.

One interesting feature of the Accra project is that the couples who assist with the intensive family study are Akan immigrants into Accra from traditionally matrilineal kinship areas, so it is envisaged that this research may throw some interesting light upon changes taking place in the modern family life and marital practices of traditionally matrilineal peoples.

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